तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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TELEVISION

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Western civilization is very attractive to the *rākṣasa* class. Eat, drink, be merry, and enjoy. This is the *rākṣasa* mentality. As soon as there is television, or similar invention, they become very much enthused. They purchase and waste their time. I have seen in America the old man of the family, one dog, one television, simply wasting time. How they are wasting the valuable human life! How they are kept in darkness! This is life. I have seen television. All some fictitious stories.

— Morning walk conversation in Bombay. 6 January 1976.

GURU AND DISCIPLE MUST BE QUALIFIED

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

What is genuine good fortune? That person who meets guru, the bona-fide representative of Krishna, is fortunate. Only one who has gotten Krishna, who has bound up Krishna in his heart, only he can make Krishna appear in the heart of his devoted disciple. No one else can give you Krishna. If someone has not gotten, how can he give? If you have one dollar, you can give fifty cents, sixty cents or one dollar. But if you don't have, then how can you give? Similarly, we should approach someone who has obtained Krishna, who has developed *prema-bhakti* and has bound up Krishna in his heart. In his *Śaraṇāgati, bhajana-lālasā* (song 7), Bhaktivinode prays:

kṛṣṇa se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāro
tomāra śakati āche
āmi to' kāṅgāla, kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa bali',
dhāi tava pāche pāche

O *vaiṣṇava ṭhākura!* Krishna belongs to you because you have bound Him up in your heart by the rope of prema. Only you can give me Krishna because you have gotten Him. I am kāṅgāla, I am a pauper. I am bereft of Krishna, so I am running behind you, begging your causeless mercy, "Please give me Krishna! Please give me Krishna!"

One may hear *pravacanas*, lectures, from so many persons, but if they are not realized souls, if they have not gotten Krishna, not developed *prema-bhakti*, one will not be able to understand this *paramārtha-tattva*, this supreme goal. One cannot understand this *tattva* by dint of his merit, scholarship, or intelligence. It can be understood only by one who is always crying in his heart, "Oh Krishna, how can I know You? How can I approach You?" Krishna is there in the heart. He understands, "This soul is crying for Me." So He arranges for that person to meet a bona-fide guru who can give him Krishna, who can teach him about *kṛṣṇa-tattva*. That guru is a dear devotee. He is Krishna's bona fide representative and is the manifestation of *paramātmā*. That is *guru-tattva*. *Paramātmā* only manifests Himself as guru before a person who is crying for Krishna in his heart. "How can I get Krishna? How can I approach Krishna? How can I serve Krishna? Without Krishna's dear devotee, His representative the guru, I cannot do so. I don't know who is guru. I am a conditioned soul having four defects. I cannot recognize such a person with my defective senses. But Krishna, You know who is Your dear devotee. Unless You help me, how can I come to You?" This is the prayer to be offered to Krishna. By Krishna's mercy, one will meet such a guru who is Krishna's dear devotee and bona fide representative. Take shelter of him and completely surrender — *gurupādāśraya-dīkṣā*. As *Gītā* says, *praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā* — serve

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him, please him, satisfy him, and then humbly ask questions relating to *tattva*. By his causeless mercy, he will impart *tattva-jñāna*. This is the process. Take shelter of him and do *bhajana* under his guidance.

You don't know how to do *bhajana*. Krishna is the *bhajanīya-vastu*, the worshipable object. Guru will teach you how to serve Krishna, how to surrender unto His lotus feet, how to please Him. He will teach you by his own example, not theoretically. Under his guidance, you will do *sādhana*, *bhajana*. Thus, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya* 22.25) says:

> *tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje kare gurura sevana*
> *māyā-jāla chuṭe, pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

If the conditioned soul engages in the service of the Lord and simultaneously carries out the orders of his spiritual master and serves him, he can get out of the clutches of *māyā* and become eligible for shelter at Krishna's lotus feet.

Heavy Responsibility

Such a guru, who is a bona-fide representative of Krishna, has come down from Krishna's abode. There is a *prema-bhakti-sūtra*. "*Sūtra*" means "rope" or "thread". One end of the *prema-bhakti-sūtra* is attached to the lotus feet of Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan. The guru has come with the other end of that rope here. The conditioned souls, fallen in the deep, dark well of material existence, are suffering. Such a guru is outside the well. He's not under the grip of *māyā*. He throws his end of the rope to the conditioned souls in the dark well of material existence and says, "Clasp it very tightly." Then he pulls you up. This is the process. The guru does this. It is not an easy affair to deliver even one conditioned soul from the fort of *māyā*. The guru has to spend gallons and gallons of spiritual blood to deliver just one soul. It is a heavy responsibility. If even one conditioned soul is delivered, the guru feels so much happiness.

It is a reciprocal affair. It is not one-sided. You should clasp the end of the rope very tightly. That means you should follow the guru's instruction as it is. Don't twist it. Don't add any of your deliberation to it. Whatever he says, just do exactly that. He gives some "do's" and some "don'ts". You must strictly follow his instructions. Don't be lazy. Then the guru will pull you up. Otherwise, if you are not serious, if you are lazy, careless or superfluous, you will never accept guru's instruction. Or you half accept it and half reject it. You add your own deliberations and twist it. Then you cannot be helped. If you are very serious, very strict, then guru will pull you up. That is his duty. Otherwise, guru may lift you up, then you deviate or become lenient and then you again fall down. Seeing this, the guru feels great pain in his heart, "I spent so many gallons of blood to deliver him, but this fellow didn't follow, so he fell down." To deliver just one soul from *māyā's* fortress is a very difficult task. It is a heavy responsibility. This is guru.

Devotee: It is said that guru is one. How do we understand that in the presence of different bona-fide spiritual masters? Is there any specific distinction?

Gour Govinda Swami: The absolute is one, not many. But those who do not know this *tattva* say, "Oh, there are many gods. Rama is a god, Nrisingha is a god, Vamana is a god, Matsya is a god." They are confused. But if one understands in *tattva*, then there is no confusion. As the Lord is one, the guru is also one in *tattva* — but there are different manifestations. A conditioned soul cannot understand this. By the mercy of the guru, one receives this *tattva-jñāna*.

Levels of Gurus

Devotee: There are different varieties of gurus?

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes.

Devotee: Can we say that among them there are different levels of advancement — *madhyama-adhikāra, kaniṣṭha-adhikāra?*

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, different levels of advancement are there. As one deserves, one gets. As an example, a shopkeeper may have varieties of commodities, first class, second class, and third class. Different customers want different qualities of commodities. The shopkeeper wants to dispose of his goods, so he shows you a third class item and tells you it is first class. In this way, he tests to see whether the customer wants third class or first class, and how much he can afford.

If, after seeing his goods, you say, "No, I don't appreciate this. Do you have anything better?" Then the shopkeeper replies, "Better things are there, but the price is more — fifty dollars." If you can afford it, you say, "All right, show me." Then he will show you something superior.

And then if you again say, "No, no. I want something better."

"I have something better than this, but the price is one hundred dollars."

If you are prepared to spend the money, you will say, "Yes, I want that thing." Then he shows you the best quality. Varieties are there. It is up to you to decide what you want.

Devotee: Where do we get the money to make our purchase?

Gour Govinda Swami: You have to earn the money, otherwise how can you purchase the commodity? It is up to you what variety you want. One who is really crying, thinks, "I want the best. I don't want second class or third class. I want the topmost." Krishna knows your heart, so He arranges. It is up to you. What you desire, you get. Krishna knows what you deserve, and He makes an appropriate arrangement for you. If Krishna sees, "This fellow is not serious. He is just speaking externally. He is not crying in his heart. He wants to be cheated." Then Krishna tells *māyā* to arrange, and you are cheated. As you deserve, you get.

Hypocrites and Pretenders

Devotee: Prabhupada used to give the example that sometimes persons posing as *sādhus* go to holy places, and also some frivolous women go just to capture a *sādhu* so that they can have a son. However, the person who was posing as a *sādhu* was not really a *sādhu*.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, he is a hypocrite, a pretender. There are many pretenders and many hypocrites. But a real *sādhu* is very rare. Still, genuine *sādhus* are there. If there were no sun and moon, how would this cosmic manifestation go on? Similarly, if there were no *sādhus*, how would Krishna's *saṁsāra*, Krishna's *līlā*, go on? Because we are conditioned souls, our vision is defective. Although a *sādhu* may come before us, we cannot see him. Therefore, one should not say that there are no *sādhus*. Instead, one should say, "I am a blind person. I cannot see a *sādhu*." Then one will be very eager to acquire such vision.

Only by the help of the sunshine can you see the sun. Similarly, only by the mercy of Krishna can you see Him or understand Him. That mercy is received through a pure *sādhu*. Only by the mercy of a *sādhu* can you see or understand Krishna. You cannot understand Krishna through your intelligence or merit. You cannot see Him by your vision. Most people think they are the seer. You are not the seer. Krishna is the seer. *Sādhu* is the seer. You are to be seen. You think it is just the opposite, so you are cheated. You have no vision, how can you see? This is our *vaiṣṇava* philosophy. This is Mahaprabhu's teaching. We are very proud of our senses. We want to see. We want to perceive through our senses, but they are defective. The only thing required is to cry before Krishna from the core of the heart. Then Krishna makes a perfect arrangement. Those who have cried, they have gotten. Those who have not cried, they have not gotten. You have to cry, then you'll meet guru. By guru's mercy, you'll get Krishna. *Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā* and *guru-kṛpā* are interrelated. In Mahaprabhu's teachings to Rupa Goswami in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya* 19.151) he has said, *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* — by the mercy of guru and Krishna one receives the seed of the devotional creeper. First comes *kṛṣṇa-kṛpā* by which you meet guru, and then, by the mercy of guru, you get Krishna. That is our process.

Mercy and Cheating

Devotee: I have heard that the disciple has to be very serious.

Gour Govinda Swami: If one is not serious, one cannot get anything. You should understand that the *sādhu* has two things: *kṛpā* and *vañcanā*. *Vañcanā* means cheating. One who deserves *kṛpā*, mercy, gets it. One who deserves cheating, he is cheated. The example is Pundarik Vidyanidhi. Pundarik Vidyanidhi was a very elevated devotee, a *mahā-bhāgavata*. However, if anyone would see him they would think he was a *bhogī*, an enjoyer. He would wear costly garments and keep valuable rings on all ten fingers. He would sit on an opulent cushion and chew *pan*, spitting in a precious pot made of gold and *aṣṭadhātu*. How is he a *mahā-bhāgavata?* Externally, he seemed to be a *bhogī*. But what was inside no one could understand. Only one who has vision can understand and see his real form. Those who only see what is on the outside are cheated. Many people are not serious to see the real thing. They only want external things. They want to be cheated, so that is what they get.

Once, Mukunda told Gadadhar Pandit, "Let us go and see Pundarik Vidyanidhi. He is a *mahā-bhāgavata*." When Gadadhar Pandit arrived there, he only saw these outward things, and in his mind he thought, "What has Mukunda told me? He is a *mahā-bhāgavata?* No, he is a *bhogī!*" Mukunda could understand what Gadadhar was thinking, so he immediately recited a verse from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3.2.23):

aho bakī yaṁ stana-kāla-kūṭaṁ
jighāṁsayāpāyayad apy asādhvī

lebhe gatiṁ dhātry-ucitāṁ tato 'nyaṁ
kaṁ vā dayāluṁ śaraṇaṁ vrajema

Bakī means Putana, the sister of Bakasura. To kill baby Krishna she smeared a very dreadful poison on her breast. She then allowed Krishna to suck her breast. But what did Krishna do? Krishna sucked her breast, and along with it He sucked out her life air. She died, but as she had done the work of a mother, Krishna gave her the position of mother. Therefore, this verse is saying, "Is there anyone to take shelter of who is more merciful than Krishna?"

As soon as Mukunda spoke this verse, Pundarik Vidyanidhi became ecstatic. He rolled on the ground and tears came from his eyes. All of the *aṣṭa-sāttvikāḥ-bhāva* symptoms were manifest in him. He tore his opulent cushion and smashed his spitting pot.

Gadadhar Pandit thought, "Oh, he is a genuine *mahā-bhāgavata*. I have committed a great offense thinking him to be a *bhogī*. Unless I am punished by him, how will I be free of the reactions to this offense? I must become his disciple. Then he will catch hold of my ear and slap me. He will inflict discipline on me, and in that way I'll be freed from my reaction." Therefore Gadadhar Pandit took mantra from Pundarik Vidyanidhi and became his disciple.

So Pundarik Vidyanidhi's external appearance was cheating, his inner nature was different. But who could see it? Therefore, *sādhu* has two things, *kṛpā* and *vañcanā* — mercy and cheating. If someone only wants external things, he is cheated. And if he wants inner things, he gets mercy, *kṛpā*. Therefore, I say, you deserve what you get. Krishna knows what you want and what you deserve. A suitable arrangement will be made for you. Although there are many thousands of Prabhupada disciples, how many have gotten real mercy? One says, "Don't you know who I am? I am a Prabhupada disciple!" In actuality, he is suffering and suffering. Now he has become a *karmī* and is gliding down to hell. Why is this? If you are not serious, you cannot receive mercy. You are such a rascal! He gave you mercy but you cannot receive it. You are so unfortunate! Sometimes I'm amazed! How is it that these Prabhupada disciples cannot understand this point? If you are serious, if you are hankering and crying in your heart, then mercy and help is always there. It is hanging like a rope in front of you — you just have to grab it. However, you are careless, not serious. So, although it is hanging right in front of you, still you cannot have it.

Guru Means Heavy

Devotee: It is our responsibility as disciples and grand-disciples of Srila Prabhupada to set a good example. The disciples must be serious as well as the devotees accepting the role of spiritual masters.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, one who plays the role of guru should be guru in the true sense, not a pretender or a cheater. He must be a real teacher. He should be conscious of his capacity. If I can only carry one ton, why should I accept a load of two tons? If you take more than you can carry, you'll be crushed, degraded. That is the result of greed. Why develop such greed? One should be conscious of his capacity. "I have no capacity, I cannot deliver a soul, I am not liberated myself, so why shall I accept disciples?" Accepting disciples when one does not have the capacity is only cheating and hypocrisy, nothing else. "I am not completely free from *anarthas*, so how can I make him free?" Guru means heavy. It also means heavy responsibility. It is not an easy affair to deliver even one soul from the clutches of *māyā*, the fort of Durga. To do so, the guru has to spend gallons and gallons of spiritual blood. This is not child's play. Also, the disciple must be serious.

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